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BISHOP'S GLEES.

By G. A. MACFARREN.

(Continued from page 318.)

"SLEEP, gentle Lady," is the initial piece of the composer's professedly complete collection of his Glees. This Serenade from the opera of *Clari, or the Maid of Milan*, was originally written for four male voices; its great popularity induced a demand for it in other, more available, forms, and the composer arranged it therefore for soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, and bass, but this arrangement is, as regards the voice parts, merely a transposition; greater ingenuity is shewn in a third version of the same piece, in which the vocal score is compressed into three parts, preserving the chief features of the harmony, and though some of the original fulness of effect could not but be sacrificed in such an arrangement, the combinations are always agreeable, if the chords be sometimes incomplete. The lulling softness of the music is well attuned to the subject, and its pleasing character is attested by its universal success.

"The winds whistle cold," from the dramatic adaptation of *Guy Mannering*, was written for three male voices occasionally doubled in chorus; it is also transposed for chamber performance to suit two sopranos and a bass. This and the preceding piece, differing widely in character, display the two best aspects of the composer's genius—the jolly and the gentle; he is never more at home with himself, his singers, and his hearers, than when, in his natural melodies with their simple and unsought harmony, he expresses the bluff frankness of a merry heart or the sweet kindness of a tender one.

"Come, thou Monarch of the Vine," the bacchanalian song in *Antony and Cleopatra*, is one of the pieces interpolated in *A Comedy of Errors*; it is set for three male voices, occasionally doubled in chorus. It is the custom of the present day so highly to decorate the plays of Shakspeare with scenery, costume, and other stage accessories, that, as the witty Jerrold remarked, "one cannot see the poet for his clothes." It was the practice of the expedient managers of from forty to fifty years since, to scatter his plays with music, indifferently regarding the sources whence they took the words for the composer, the fitness of these to the situation in which they were inserted, and the propriety of the interruption of the scene, as of entirely secondary consideration; we may guess it to have been their conviction, that, in delivering the text of the great poet, the actors' only chance of speaking to some tune, was to sing it. Another generation may or may not come to view the

present usage of the stage with reproving censure; doubtless the very quickly obsolete policy of the past time had its defensive argument, which is lost with the practice it supported; it is now regarded, however, with unreserved condemnation, and we can only wish that the short comings of our contemporaries may appear less Vandalic to our successors, than do those of our precursors seem barbarous to us. Well, the plays of Shakspeare were done into operas, according to their kind; the consequence of which naturally was that they were given neither as plays nor as operas, but the speaking and the interpolated music were equally detrimental, each to the effect of the other. It was Bishop's fortune to concoct rather than compose the music to most of these perversions, appropriating any settings of the words then extant, of whatever period and in whatever style—eking these out for stage purposes with additions of his own, and investing them with orchestration—and, where no such were ready to his hand, producing original pieces, some of which rank among the best, and some among the least estimable of his works. The present Glee can scarcely be placed in either of these classes; it is clear, bold, rhythmical and vocal, but it lacks saliency to seize upon the attention.

"Mynheer Vandunck," from the play of *The Law of Java*, is for three male voices with occasional chorus. That it was not modified to suit ladies' compass is not to be attributed to any defection in its popularity, but solely to the unfeminine character of the words. Of the same metal is this as the preceding Glee, but of a very different polish; such humour as there is in the verses is enriched fifty-fold by the racy rendering of this through its musical medium; and in truth the composer produced few things that better deserved, or more completely won, the true relish of the public.

"When the storms aloft arise," from the early volume of Glees dedicated to Bianchi, is for three male voices. The pianoforte or harp accompaniment is but a double of the voices, and it would be better omitted than played for the good effect of the singing, though there is no notification of this in either the original or the later edition. The composer's aim has here been to produce a companion to the Club Glees, which stood at the summit of critical esteem when this piece was written. It is more definite in its rhythm, and consequently more clear in its melody, than are many of its class, while its harmony is as simple and its part-writing as flowing as what appears in the best of them; it is wanting in the author's general merit of expression, having little in common with the words of Ossian, to which it is set, and none of the emphatic character that led Macpherson's publication to be regarded as poetry.

"Up, quit thy bower," for two female and two male unaccompanied voices, is from a set of

six dedicated to Lord Burghersh, the founder of the Royal Academy of Music, most of which were written for the Concentores, when, on the occasions of his evenings' presidency, in rotation with the other members of the Society, Bishop was required to produce a new composition. Smooth and graceful in the flow of all the parts—strikingly attractive in the principal melody,—novel and fresh, though quite unforced, in its harmony,—and happy in its treatment of the nimble, pert, pretty verses of Joanna Baillie,—this Glee has only to be more known to be more liked than it is.

"When wearied wretches sink to sleep," from the Bianchi Volume, is for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, with an accompaniment that has a charming incident near the end which renders it indispensable. The music is more coherent than the verses, which are selected with some regard to contrast but no respect to sense, from a plurality of poets. This piece demands the specialities of Glee-singing in its interpretation, and is therefore not available for choral but only for solo performance.

"Where art thou, beam of light?" from the Bianchi Volume, is for two sopranos, tenor, and bass, with dispensable accompaniment. As in a previous instance, this fails in character to fit it to the words from Ossian to which it is set; it is vocal and graceful, but, if there be any poetry in the lines, it is compounded of other elements than these. After the first interrogatory phrases, the music would better suit any of the pastoral writings of the last century than the wild expressions ascribed to the blind Celtic bard.

"A cup of wine," one of the interpolations in the musicated version of *Twelfth Night*, is for four male voices, sometimes doubled in chorus, with essential accompaniment. Truly convivial in spirit, and broad, clear, and massive,—merrier sounds came never from the heart of good fellowship than make the sum total of this capital piece of music.

"Foresters, sound the cheerful horn," from the volume dedicated to Bianchi, is for four male voices, the original dispensable accompaniment having been extended with symphonies and other essential passages, and adapted for horns. No better proof than this is needed of the early vigour of Bishop's thoughts; he never produced anything more fresh and genial, more vocal, or more striking. The marked rhythm, the definite melody, and the resonant natural harmony of the piece, are its passport to perpetuity; and coming generations will hear it with as true a zest as did the past and does the present.

"Majestic Night," a detached Glee, is for four male voices, with dispensable accompaniment. With more pretension than effect, this piece betokens more ambition than musicianship in its author; not that there is anything to except against the grammatical propriety of its

progressions, nor that there is ground for complaint in the smoothness of its modulations; but it wants definiteness of melody, clearness of design, diversity of accent, and any other relief to the constant four-part harmony, to render it interesting.

"No more the morn with tepid rays," from the set dedicated to Lord Burghersh, is another Glee for four male voices, designed, like the rest of the series, to be sung without accompaniment. Its eight changes of tempo, its consequently fragmentary character, its conventional picturing of some of the words, its want of striking melody in spite of its constant melodiousness and its smooth part-writing—points either for regret or admiration—all associate it with the Glee of the end of the last century, with which it may be admired and with which forgotten.

"What shall he have that killed the deer?" from *As you like it*, is one of the interpolations in a *Comedy of Errors*, being set for four male voices, doubled occasionally in chorus, with essential accompaniment. It is not the best of the class, but it is of the class in which Bishop ever appears to best advantage.

"Where shall we make her grave?" is designed to be sung without accompaniment for four male voices. It was first published in the Lord Burghersh Volume, having gained the prize awarded by the Gentlemen's Glee Club in Manchester, for the best serious Glee, in 1832, and belongs therefore to the class this prize was intended to foster. The remarks on several of the preceding pieces in the same style, apply equally to this. Bishop was a mate for the best writers of the revered Glee school, but he surpassed them all and most truthfully asserted himself when he wrote in those revived forms, which, by adoption and by exception from previously prevalent practice, became his own.

"When would a mortal e'er require," from the Bianchi volume, is for soprano, tenor, and bass, with an accompaniment that little more than doubles the voices. The speciality of the rhythm is the most striking feature of this piece; its form, of a resumption of the opening movement after a change of measure and tempo, aptly illustrates the words, which were written for the composer by Sheridan Knowles, probably with a view to this construction, having, after a solution of the opening query, a final affirmation that "Then a mortal would desire" all that is proposed at the commencement.

"The Pilgrims," is for two sopranos and bass, with an essential florid accompaniment. It is light and graceful, but has nothing to individualise it. It is from a work in three volumes, published in 1827, called *Lays and Legends of the Rhine*, consisting of songs and concerted pieces composed by Bishop to poems by Mr. Planché, each embodying some Rhenish tradition.

"Give me a cup of the grape's bright dew," from Pocock's operatic romance of *The Doom*

Kiss, is for six male voices, doubled once in chorus, with accompaniment. The effect is obscure, where, after the opening solo, the chief melody is assigned to an inner part; it may have been on this account that Bishop re-arranged it for three voices, transposing the greater portion of the Glee so as to give the principal melody to the alto, but thus necessitating the continuance of one key throughout the whole, as the portion which originally stands in the key of the dominant would, in the altered version, be out of all vocal compass. It equals not the Glees of the same character that the composer produced in his younger days.

"The Fatal Sisters," commencing "Now the storm begins to low'r," from the Bianchi series, is for three male voices with indispensable accompaniment. The passages from Myddelton's *Witch*, incorporated in *Macbeth*, with the music falsely ascribed to Matthew Locke, that is sung to them, are the precedent for the conventional practice of English musicians to assign any solo parts for members of the weird sisterhood to male voices, while the same writers employ ladies in their choruses with equal freedom in affairs of witchcraft, and in matters of greater respectability. Faithful to this custom, Bishop presents the three old women, who are supposed to utter Gray's mystic lines, in the persons of three gentlemen glee singers. Long standing gives a venerable colour to this distribution, but even usage cannot force one to feel the effect to be appropriately characteristic. One digression from the key, near the end of this piece, is singularly felicitous, and elevates the whole to a rank far above that to which its sententious opening entitles it.

"O there was a dragon of might," is for three male voices, the accompaniment of which may well be spared, save in the passages for a single voice, and even there it scarcely improves the effect. It is from the *Lays and Legends of the Rhine*, the words being a comic version of the story of "Sir Siegfried and the Lindeworm;" the music aims at the style of Callcott's "Red Cross Knight," "When Arthur first," and other such pieces, but falls far short of the humour of these originals.

"Push about the bottle, boys," from the early opera of *The Maniac, or the Swiss Banditti*, is for three male voices, sometimes doubled in chorus with accompaniment. It is not equal to several others of its class, either in spirit or in substance; the frequent employment of the diminished triad gives unsatisfactory effect to the harmony, and there is little besides the melodiousness of each part to compensate for this.

"Push the red wine about," from the operatic drama of *The Heir of Veroni*, is for the same voices as the preceding, and is much of the same character; the chief melody is more striking, but more trite.

"Sportive little trifter tell me," from the Bianchi volume, is for three male voices, designed to be sung without accompaniment. Even the graceful smoothness that marks this can scarcely overbalance a sense of ridicule, from the effect of three men singing such foolishly sentimental words as those to which the very pretty music is set.

"The Bishop of Mentz," from the *Lays and Legends*, is a comic version of the story of the Mouse Tower on the Rhine, set for three unaccompanied voices. The music is full of character, and the words are well declaimed; but the taste is more than questionable of choosing a subject fraught with such horrors as the burning of the bishop's victims for jocular treatment, and this must ever prevent the great popularity of the piece.

"The sailors' welcome home," beginning "Our ship in port," is for three male voices with dispensable accompaniment, from the opera of *For England, ho!* Few pieces in the whole collection have greater merit than this; it is in the form of a harmonised song of two verses, and is so tuneful, so fresh and clear, so simple and so hearty, that one wonders what accident can have prevented its universal popularity, fully believing the while that such destiny is still in store for it, and that when, as the words run, "We drink, and drink with glee," this will often be the Glee appropriated to the occasion.

"With the pomp of nodding sheaves," from the historical romance of *The Beacon of Liberty*, is for three male voices with accompaniment. The music is graceful, but wanting wholly in the spirit that should fit it to the subject—the celebration of a southern harvest, one in the treatment of which Bishop might have been expected peculiarly to excel.

"See, the glass is out," from *The Mysterious Bride*, is for three male voices, doubled in chorus at the end of each verse, with accompaniment. The martial and bacchanal character of the words is realised in their animated setting; but they have no merit, which may be some hindrance to the general acceptance of the Glee.

"Ronilda," from the Bianchi volume, is for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, designed to be unaccompanied. The name of the lady addressed, which is extra to the metre at the end of each stanza of Shenstone's poem, appears to have embarrassed the composer, and instead of prompting a point of rhythmical interest, has compelled him to prolong, without giving character to his phrases. The employment of two second inversions in succession exemplifies the somewhat loose character of the harmony, and the pompous bass passage on the word "splendour," suffices not to render the piece attractive. One may wonder, that, in revising this Glee for re-publication, the composer did not, as he did in several pieces from the same

series, give it the benefit of his matured experience, and correct its irregularities.

"O Skylark, for thy wing," from the Burghersh volume, is for four unaccompanied male voices. It has the merit, too rare in pieces of its especial class, of continuity—being one unbroken well developed movement; but it has little else to recommend it, further than its being well written for the voices. The change of key at the words "that I might soar"—the extremely ambiguous harmony at the words "to wreath me"—and some other points little less questionable, make one wonder that a writer of Bishop's accustomed purity should claim the authorship of this Glee.

"Come forth, sweet spirit," from the same series as the last, is for the same voices; this address to the moon is appropriately tranquil, and while it never startles with its beauty, never prompts a doubt of its complete harmoniousness.

"E'en as the sun," one of the interpolations in the operatised version of *As you like it*, is for four male voices, doubled occasionally in chorus, with accompaniment. It must surely be apart from the poet's intention, to treat the opening lines of his *Venus and Adonis* as a hunting Glee; but this fault of inappropriation may lie with the dramatic carver and gilder who discharged the task of framing and glazing Shakspeare; and Bishop, whose engagement at the theatre required him to set music to whatever words were furnished him, is not accountable for the same. This piece may be said to comprise two compositions in one, the entire words being completely set twice through, which gives it some effect of prolixity, in spite of its prevalent animation.

"With hawk and hound," from the opera of *Maid Marian*, is for four male voices, with accompaniment. This, comparatively with several less known pieces of the same character, is unequal to the wide reputation it has gained; its strong rhythmical accent and its great simplicity are all its merits.

"To harmony," from the Bianchi volume, is for a soprano and four male voices, with necessary accompaniment. There are some pieces that, while they provokingly present no point for objection, will generally be more pleasing to the singers than the listeners, among which class this Glee may be counted; musicians are rarely less interesting than when they apostrophise their own art, forgetting, it should seem, that harmony is less to be sung about, than to be sung.

(To be continued.)

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

THE new opera of M. Gounod—*Mireille* in French, and *Mirella* in Italian—was produced at this establishment on the 5th ult., and achieved a success which we cannot but believe was owing partly to its composer having written another opera, called *Faust*, portions of which are now on every pianoforte and on every barrel-organ in London. Much should always be expected of a man who creates an universal fame; but experience has proved that to

whatever height this expectation may have been raised, the public is very apt to rest contented with a considerable abatement in a second transaction, on account of the extremely satisfactory nature of the first. That *Mirella* is the production of a thoughtful and intelligent composer, and moreover of one who has in him the true dramatic faculty, is beyond a doubt; but we confidently affirm that although it will not detract from his previous reputation, it will not advance it. To say that the first two acts are full of charming music, and that the other three are dreary and colourless, is only to declare that, as an entire opera, it fails to produce its effect. A composer has his choice of subject, and must be held responsible for the result; and when we find—as in the case of *Mirella*—that to prevent the absolute weariness which a work creates in its original state, a whole act is suppressed, and the music which remains is altered and cut about, so as to destroy the whole framework of the opera, we do not criticise by any high standard of art when we say that we cannot rank it amongst the enduring creations of genius. Having thus given our reasons for qualifying the announcement of the success of M. Gounod's new opera, we have much pleasure in drawing attention to the many beauties scattered throughout the work. The overture contains an expressive subject for the oboe (an instrument, by the way, for which the composer has an evident fondness), but the *coda* is conventional, and even vulgar, a fault which all the cleverness of the instrumentation cannot redeem. The chorus for soprano voices, on the rising of the curtain, is a positive inspiration, melodious, fresh, and breathing the air of the lovely mulberry-garden in Provence, where the scene is laid. In this act must also be mentioned a delicately written duet for *Mirella* and her lover, the poor basket-maker, in which the theme of the overture is introduced. Beautiful, too, is the treatment of the opening chorus, on its re-appearance, when it is sung behind the scenes as an accompaniment to the farewell of the lovers, and dies away as the curtain falls. In the second act we have a Provençal dance, which reminds us somewhat of the valse in *Faust*; and this is followed by the "Chanson de Magali," a sort of two-part ballad, sung by *Mirella* and *Vincenzo*, pleasing in melody, and peculiar in rhythm, the bars alternating between 9.8 and 6.8, an effect generally, but falsely, expressed in 5 time. The air for *Taven*, the Sorceress, is one of the most characteristic pieces in the opera, and is already familiar in the concert-room under its French title, "Voici la saison, mignonne." The grand aria for *Mirella* is cut to the modern Italian fashion, and is, in fact, merely a string of conventional passages, such as we could scarcely have imagined M. Gounod would have signed his name to. Indeed, the music of *Mirella's* part throughout has so little in it to seize upon the attention of an audience, that even in those portions where the dramatic interest seems to culminate, the want of that colouring so observable in *Margherita*, seems to drag her down to a mere common-place heroine of the weakest Verdi school. A great deal of the music in the next three acts, or what may be called the melodramatic part of the opera, is to be commended on account of the composer's knowledge of dramatic effect, and his power over the orchestra; but he has evidently written with difficulty, and the want of that impulse of genius which alone can render a work of this length and pretension endurable, is the one thing which, as we before said, will prevent *Mirella* from strengthening the previous reputation of its composer. The pastoral character of the first two acts is admirably sustained in the music; but it is precisely when the conflict of human passion commences that the composer fails; and as, for ultimate success, the power must always equal the ambition, M. Gounod has no right to complain that *Mirella* is not accepted as another *Faust*. Of the performance of the opera we can generally speak in the highest terms of praise. Madlle. Tietjens, although not quite in her element as the peasant girl, sang the music excellently, and labored hard to produce an effect with somewhat thankless